

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Rush Holt (NJ-12) - Chair of the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel and a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence –today succeeded in including language in the 2010 Intelligence Authorization Bill that would require the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to examine the possibility of a foreign connection to the 2001 anthrax attacks. The report would be unclassified with a classified annex and would go to the intelligence, foreign affairs, judiciary, and homeland security committees of the House and Senate. The House is expected to pass the Intelligence Authorization Bill tonight.

“The FBI botched this case from the very beginning, and now they have arbitrarily closed the investigation because they are sure they have their man – just as they were sure they had their first man, who they had to pay \$6 million for false arrest,” Holt said. “Yet, there are too many questions that the victims’ families, law enforcement, and the general public deserve answered. This amendment would help answer one of those questions. Given that samples of the strain of anthrax that was used in the attacks may have been supplied to foreign laboratories, it is important to examine whether or not evidence of a potential foreign connection to the attacks was overlooked, ignored, or simply not passed along to the FBI.

Last week, the FBI announced it formally closed its investigation of the 2001 anthrax letter attacks, commonly known as the “Amerithrax” investigation. The attacks evidently originated from a postal box in Holt’s Central New Jersey congressional district, killing five, and disrupting the lives and livelihoods of many of his constituents. The attacks greatly contributed to the national fear of terrorism and affected the response of our nation to these attacks. Holt has consistently raised questions about the federal investigation into the attacks.

“To date, there has been no independent, comprehensive examination of the FBI’s conduct in this investigation,” Holt added. “This provision would help us begin an independent examination of our government’s response to these attacks by having the Intelligence Community IG determine whether there was a foreign connection to these attacks.”

The Intelligence Authorization Bill includes additional provisions proposed by Rep. Holt. One provision would require the videorecording of all pertinent interactions between CIA officers and detainees arrested in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. This would maximize intelligence derived from interrogations and help prevent detainee abuses such as those that happened in Abu Ghraib. Video records would be kept at the appropriate level of classification, and would be available to intelligence personnel who could examine them for any potential intelligence

benefit. Holt's provision would require the Director of the CIA to develop guidelines for ensuring that the required videorecording is expansive enough to prevent abuses of detainees' fundamental human rights under U.S. and international law.

The provision is similar to one that Holt included in the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act and that now serves as the legal basis for the videorecording of detainee interrogations within the Department of Defense.

"The benefits of recording interrogations are evident, and law enforcement organizations across the U.S. routinely use the practice to both protect the person being interrogated and the officer conducting the interrogations," Holt said. "Clearly, the CIA itself valued this tool as well—otherwise it would not have made recordings of interrogations of certain "high value" detainees after they were captured in the wake of the 9/11 attacks."

Holt also secured language in the bill directing the Director of the CIA to conduct a classification review of CIA records that may be relevant to helping veterans, scientists, and medical providers better understand the scope of potential toxic exposures among Operation Desert Storm veterans.

"Sick Desert Storm veterans have been waiting for years for our government to make public any information in its possession about the kinds of toxic agents they may have been exposed to during and immediately after the 1991 war," Holt said. "This is a long overdue step towards meeting that goal."